

ER

Central Intelligence Agency



OCA 86-3116

Washington, D.C. 20505

19 SEP 1986

The Honorable Jesse Helms
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Helms:

This is in response to your 29 August 1986 letter, which was received on 4 September, regarding the 1983 shootdown of KAL-007. The shootdown of KAL-007 occurred because Soviet air defense personnel consciously chose to fire at the aircraft. The immediate causes of this tragic event were failures on the part of Soviet forces to identify the airliner early in its penetration, when they would have had sufficient time to use nonlethal means to force it down. But the overlying cause of the event was a Soviet policy that valued the sanctity of Soviet airspace over the safety of international air travel. Certainly this value has no place in a civilized world.

The current debate on what the Soviets thought about their target is misplaced. Although it is clear that the Soviets had initially misidentified this airliner, we will never know precisely what the Soviet pilot and his controller were actually thinking as the interceptor closed in on its target that tragic morning. What is important to keep clearly in mind is that the tragedy directly resulted from the Soviets' "shoot first, ask questions later" policy.

Moreover, past experience would suggest that even had the Soviets properly identified the aircraft, the outcome may well have been the same. In April 1978, other Soviet authorities ordered another interceptor pilot to destroy an earlier lost KAL airliner over the Kola Peninsula. In that case, perhaps less well known because of its lower loss of life, Soviet authorities knew precisely what they were



C-302F-1R

X-uf L-231

shooting at and did so with a similar lack of regard displayed in 1983. The U.S. Government, in its vigorous protests of 1983, was telling the Soviet Union that such actions have no place in this world. I believe that nothing in the Soviet approach has changed and that without such change we can expect future "accidents" with even greater human loss.

Enclosed for your information is the official U.S. Government release regarding the KAL shutdown. Any other details on this incident are still highly classified. Also enclosed is Ambassador Kirkpatrick's 6 September 1983 address to the UN Security Council which most effectively covers the issue of national responsibility. I hope that these might be of help in your attempt to deal with the current debate on KAL-007.

Sincerely,

/s/ William J. Casey

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

**Enclosures
as stated**

Distribution: w/enclss

Original - Addressee

- 1 - DCI
- 1 - DDCI
- 1 - EXDIR
- 1 - ER
- 1 - GC
- 1 - D/PAO
- 1 - D/OCA
- 1 - EO/OCA
- 1 - C/SP/D (SOVA/SIG)
- 1 -
- 1 - OCA Record
- 1 - OCA Chrono w/o encls.

STAT

STAT

DRAFTED BY:

STAT

RETYPE: aw (16 September 1986)

RETYPE: aw (18 September 1986)

OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT RELEASE REGARDING THE
SOUTH KOREAN CIVILIAN AIRLINER SHOOTDOWN

Soviet radar tracked the Korean civilian airliner (flight KAL 007) for nearly two and one half hours from approximately 1600Z until it was shot down by a Soviet fighter at 1826Z. Earlier, while enroute from Anchorage, Alaska, flight 007 was briefly in the vicinity of one of our reconnaissance planes, an RC-135, on a routine mission. The planes were soon widely separated as the Korean airliner flew on, and the RC-135 returned to its base in Alaska where it was on the ground for an hour before the shootdown occurred. At no time was that RC-135 in Soviet airspace, nor were there any other RC-135 aircraft in the Sakhalin area at the time of the shootdown. The U.S. was not aware that KAL 007 was off course.

When KAL 007 was detected by the Soviets, they scrambled jet interceptors from a base in Sakhalin Island. At least eight different fighters reacted at one time or another to the civilian airliner. The interceptor planes' radio transmissions--their conversations with each other and with their own ground control--were recorded. Although these recorded transmissions contain only the pilots' voices and not the Soviet ground controllers, it is clear that the pilots were responding to orders when the fatal rockets were fired.

The U.S. Government made known to the world the shocking facts of this incident as honestly and completely as they came to us.

Following is a transcript of an address by Ambassador Kirkpatrick to the United Nations Security Council as recorded by The New York Times:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Most of the world outside the Soviet Union has heard by now of the Korean Flight 7, carrying 289 persons between New York and Seoul, which strayed off course into Soviet airspace, was tracked by Soviet radar, was targeted by a Soviet SU-15 whose pilot coolly and after careful consideration fired two air-launched missiles which destroyed the Korean airliner and apparently its 289 passengers and crew.

This calculated attack on a civilian airliner — unarmed, undefended, as civilian airliners always are — has shocked the world.

Only the Soviet people have still not heard about this attack on the K.A.L. 7 and the death of the passengers, because the Soviet Government has not acknowledged firing on the Korean airliner. Indeed, not until Sept. 5 did Soviet officials acknowledge publicly that K.A.L. 7 had disappeared in its icy waters.

The Soviet Government has not been silent about the plane, however. It has merely lied.

Gromyko Statement

On Sept. 1, Foreign Minister Gromyko announced, and I quote: "An unidentified plane coming from the direction of the Pacific Ocean entered the airspace of the Soviet Union over Kamchatka Peninsula and for the second time violated the Soviet airspace over the Sakhalin Island.

"The plane did not have navigation lights, did not respond to queries and did not enter into contact with the radio control service."

Foreign Minister Gromyko continued: "Fighters of the antiaircraft defense, which were sent aloft toward the intruder plane, tried to give it assistance in directing it to the nearest airfield. But the intruder plane did not react to the signals and warnings from the Soviet fighters and continued its flight in the direction of the Sea of Japan." End quotation.

The next day, Sept. 2, Tass repeated Gromyko's charge that Soviet airspace had been rudely violated by quote, "an unidentified plane" which quote, "in violation of international regulations flew without navigation lights," unquote. Tass referred to efforts to establish contacts with the plane, quote, "using generally accepted signals and to take it to the nearest airfield in the territory of the Soviet Union.

"Over the Sakhalin Island," they said, "a Soviet aircraft fired warning shots with tracer shells along the flying route of the plane. Soon after this, the intruder plane left the limits of Soviet airspace and continued its flight toward the Sea of Japan. For about 10 minutes it was within the observation zone of radio location means, after which it could be observed no more." End quotation.

Plane's Navigation Lights

Yesterday, when Soviet General Romanov finally admitted that the Korean plane had crashed, killing numerous people, he again asserted the jetliner was flying with its lights out.

This is what Tass said, this is what Soviet officials said, but we do not have to worry or to — we do not have to wonder about what really happened to the airliner or to its passengers, or when it happened, or what Soviet officials knew about its fate. We know, because we know what the Soviet pilots who intercepted the Korean airline over the Sakhalin Islands said to their ground controllers during the 50-minute period from 17:36 to

18:46 on Aug. 31 while they tracked, discussed and destroyed the Korean airliner and its passengers.

The United States Government, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, has decided to spread the evidence before this Council and the world. It is available on the videotape which will be played.

On this tape you will hear the voices of pilots of Soviet interceptors, which included three SU-15 Flagon and one MIG-23 Flogger, including the SU-15 pilot who pulled the trigger which released the missiles that destroyed the Korean Air Lines Flight 7.

Instructions From Ground

While it is obvious that the pilots are acknowledging instructions from ground controllers, those instructions are not audible. What we are about to play back for you is the intercepted tape of the actual air-to-ground reports.

It is, of course, in Russian. On the monitor screens you will see, simultaneously, the original Russian and the English translation. Through your audio system you will listen to these voices in translation into all the working languages of the United Nations.

Immediately following my presentation, Mr. President, the Russian-to-English transcript will be made available to all who may wish to study it. After this session of the Security Council, an audio cassette on which voices are still clearer will be provided to any interested mission.

Nothing was cut from this tape. The recording was made on a voice-actuated recorder and, therefore, it covers only those periods of time when conversation was heard.

Let us now listen to the tape.

(Tape of Russian pilots is played)

The transcript we have just heard, Mr. President, needs little explanation. Quite simply, it establishes that the Soviets decided to shoot down a civilian airliner, shot it down, murdering the 269 persons onboard, and lied about it.

Key Points

The transcript of the pilots' cockpit conversations illuminate several key points.

The interceptor which shot K.A.L. 7 down had the airliner in sight for over 20 minutes before firing his missiles. Contrary to what the Soviets have repeatedly stated, the interceptor pilot saw the airliner's navigation lights and reported that fact to the ground on three occasions.

Contrary to Soviet statements, the pilot makes no mention of firing any warning shots — only the firing of the missiles which, he said, struck the target.

Contrary to Soviet statements, there is no indication whatsoever that the interceptor pilot made any attempt either to communicate with the airliner or to signal it for it to land in accordance with accepted international practice.

Indeed, the Soviet interceptor planes may be technically incapable of communicating by radio with civilian aircraft, presumably out of fear of Soviet pilot defections.

Question of Identity

Perhaps the most shocking fact learned from the transcript is that at no point did the pilots raise the question of the identity of the target aircraft. Nor at any time did the interceptor pilots refer to it as anything other than the target.

The only activity bearing on the identity of the aircraft was a statement by the pilot of the attacking in-

interceptor that "the target isn't responding to I.F.F." This means the aircraft did not respond to the electronic interrogation by which military aircraft identify friends or foes.

But of course, the Korean airliner, or any civilian airliner, could not have responded to I.F.F., because commercial aircraft are not equipped to do so.

We know the interceptor which shot down K.A.L. 7 flew behind, alongside and in front of the airliner, coming at least as close as two kilometers before dropping back behind the plane to fire his missiles.

At a distance of two kilometers, under the conditions prevailing at that time, it was easily possible to identify a 747 passenger airliner. Either the Soviets did not know the Korean plane was a commercial airliner, or he did not know what he was firing at.

If the latter, then he fired his deadly missiles without knowing or caring what they would hit. Though he could easily have pulled up to within some number of meters of the airliner to assure its identity, he did not bother to do so.

In either case, there was shocking disregard for human life and international norms.

In the days following the destruction of K.A.L. 7, Soviet leaders and the Soviet press have said repeatedly they do not understand what all the fuss is about.

They began by accusing the United States of creating a hullabaloo about nothing. And more recently they have accused us of a provocation, implying, though never quite saying, that we provoked them into shooting down an airliner that strayed into their space, provoked them into violating the internationally agreed upon standards and practices of behavior.

They have spoken as though a plane's straying off course is a crime punishable by death. They have suggested that "like any self-respecting state, they are doing no more than looking after their sovereignty which they shall permit no one to violate."

They have claimed, still without acknowledging that they shot down the Korean airliner, that "our anti-aircraft defense has fulfilled its duty for the defense of the security of our motherland." They have suggested that they may have mistaken the Korean airliner for an American reconnaissance plane, but still do not admit that they attacked and destroyed it.

But none of these lies, half-lies and excuses can withstand examination.

Straying off course is not recognized as a capital crime by civilized nations. No nation has the sovereign right to shoot down any person or vehicle that may stray across its border in peacetime.

It's interesting in this regard to refer to the statements made by the Soviet Government at the time that they were strenuously rejecting the complaint of the Government of Sweden of an encroachment into Swedish territorial waters.

At that time, the note addressed to the Government of Sweden by the Soviet Union said, and I quote, "What sober-minded person — to say nothing of military specialists — can suppose that a submarine in a surface run with running lights on and running diesels, the noise of which was heard over a large distance, in nighttime and in poor visibility conditions, could engage in 'impermissible activities.'"

There are internationally agreed upon standards for intercepting unwelcome aircraft. Those internationally agreed upon standards call for serious efforts at identification, verification, warning and, if the case is

serious, for intercepting the intruder and forcing it to land or to leave one's airspace.

Sovereignty neither requires nor permits shooting down airliners in peacetime.

Recently, the Soviets have implied that the K.A.L. 7 may have been mistaken for a U.S. aerial reconnaissance flight. But that is no more persuasive.

The Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 was on a routine, scheduled flight. At the time it was shot down, the U.S. reconnaissance plane referred to by the Soviets had been on the ground for more than one hour, more than 1,500 miles away.

Moreover, the United States does not fly reconnaissance missions in Soviet airspace. We do regularly operate aircraft in international airspace to monitor Soviet compliance with SALT and other arms-control agreements.

The Soviet Government knows what our usual flight patterns are and can readily identify these missions.

Finally, neither the United States nor any other country upset about the slaughter of the 269 passengers of K.A.L. 7 is creating a hulabaloo by exaggerating the importance of the event.

We are protesting a very important violation of the norms of civilized conduct on which international aviation rests, without which it will not be possible for any of us to board airliners, fly across continents and oceans without fear of becoming the object of a murderous attack.

International Air Travel

To a degree we rarely consider, international air travel depends on networks of mutual trust that we will not shoot down one another's airliners, kidnap, jail or poison passengers and crews.

Why did the Soviet Union violate these norms? Why have they lied about it?

Two reasons most often advanced to explain why the Soviet pilot shot down the airliner are, first, that it was a mistake: the mistake of a trigger-happy pilot who, with his ground controller, followed a philosophy of shoot now, identify later.

But if pilot error was responsible for this tragic mistake, why has the Soviet Government not said so? Why has it lied? And why is it complementing its murderous attack on K.A.L. 7 with a lying attack on the United States for provocation and aggression?

As I considered this question, my mind returned to a debate that took place in this Security Council some 21 years ago when my distinguished predecessor, Gov. Adlai Stevenson of Illinois, called the attention of the Council to the unmistakable evidence that a series of facilities for launching offensive nuclear missiles were being installed in the Western Hemisphere.

Soviet Representative Ambassador Zorin flatly denied those charges and, as Soviet representatives so often do, coupled his denial with a vicious attack on the United States. Calling our attention to threatening Soviet behavior, Zorin asserted, only mask the United States' own aggression and piracy.

But Adlai Stevenson, too, had evidence to back up his charge, photographic evidence as irrefutable as the audio tapes we have heard today.

The fact is that violence and lies are regular instruments of Soviet policy. Soviet officials regularly behave as though truth were only a function of force and will, as if the truth were only what they said it is, as if violence were an instrument of first resort in foreign affairs.

They occupy Afghanistan and accuse the United States of interference in its internal affairs. They create massive new European vulnerabilities with their SS-20's and accuse NATO of seeking to upset the balance of power.

We think otherwise. We believe that truth is as vital to cooperation and peace among nations as among people.

Global Prospects

It is depressing to consider seriously our global prospects if those prospects must be built on relations devoid of truth, devoid of trust.

It is depressing to consider a world in which a major nation, equipped with the most powerful modern weapons, believes it has a sovereign right to fire on a commercial airliner lost over its territory.

These Soviet actions and claims illuminate the Soviet conception of appropriate relations among nations in peacetime.

They illuminate the world in which we live and work and make policy. Of course, some sophisticated observers believe that the destruction of Flight 7 was neither the work of an isolated Strangelove, unconcerned about human life, nor of that Strangelove and his ground controller, but was instead a deliberate stroke designed to intimidate.

A brutal, decisive act meant to instill fear and hesitation in all who observed this ruthless violence. Much as the destruction of an Afghan village or the imprisonment of the Helsinki monitors are intended to secure compliance through terror.

Whichever the case, whether the destruction of K.A.L. 7 and its passengers reflect only utter indifference to human life, or whether that destruction was designed to intimidate, we are dealing here not with pilot error but with decisions and priorities characteristic of a system.

Not only did Soviet officials shoot down a stray commercial airliner and lie about, they have callously refused offers of international participation in search and rescue efforts in spite of clearly stated international standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization, which call on states to "grant any necessary permission for the entry of such aircraft, vessels, personnel or equipment into its territory and make necessary arrangements with a view to expediting such entry."

We are reminded once again that the Soviet Union is a state based on the dual principles of callousness and mendacity, dedicated to the rule of force.

Here is how Lenin described the dictatorship of the proletariat in 1920. He said, and I quote, "The scientific concept of dictatorship means nothing more than unrestricted power, absolutely unimpeded by law or regulations and resting directly on force."

It is this principle of force, this mentality of force, that lies at the root of the Korean Air Line tragedy. This is the reality revealed to the world by the tragedy. It is a reality we must all ponder, as we consider threats to peace and human rights that face us today.

The United States deeply believes that immediate steps should be taken here in the United Nations to decrease the likelihood of any repetition of the tragedy of K.A.L. 7.

We ask our colleagues to join with us in the coming days in the effort to wrest from this tragedy new clarity about the character of our world and new constructive efforts to render us all more secure in the air and on the ground.

Page Denied

STAT